

City of Reading  
City Council  
Work Session  
Tuesday, February 20, 2007

**Council Members Present**

Vaughn Spencer, President  
Stephen Fuhs  
Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz  
Stratton Marmarou  
Dennis Sterner  
Maria Baez

**Council Member Absent**

Jeff Waltman

**Others Present**

L. Churchill  
J. Hassel  
C. Younger  
C. Jones  
L. Kelleher

**Call to Order**

President of Council Vaughn Spencer called the work session to order at 7:10 pm. He announced that Councilor Waltman is unable to attend due to illness.

**Managing Director's Report**

Managing Director Churchill highlighted the report distributed to Council at the work session. The report highlighted the projected cuts in CDBG funding contained in President Bush's budget for fiscal year 2008. He also noted that the BEP has requested a \$30,000 City contribution for a federal lobbyist (Artemis).

Council President Spencer noted that BEP is seeking \$1.6 million in federal appropriations through the lobbyist. He inquired if the cost for the lobbyist will exceed \$55,000. Mr. Churchill replied that the projected cost is \$5,000 per month. Council President Spencer questioned the nominal amount

for the lobbyist as the normal cost for this service is usually much higher. He questioned paying for this type of advocacy as the City has obtained so much more through the work of a volunteer.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that Council should review the plan and goals of the advocate before agreeing to allocate \$30,000 to the cause.

Ms. Kelleher inquired if the Finance Committee would like to discuss this further at their March meeting. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that the request for \$30,000 by BEP for a lobbyist be placed on the Finance Committee agenda.

### **Annual Report from the Board of Health**

City Health Officer Dr. Jeffrey Hassel highlighted the report distributed with the Council agenda. He stated that Reading has not had any outbreaks of the West Nile Virus.

Councilor Marmarou inquired if the City was called to assist with the shut down of I-78 last week. Dr. Hassel replied that assistance was provided by communities surrounding I-78.

Councilor Sterner thanked the Board of Health for their work and annual report.

Dr. Hassel stressed the need for additional Board of Health members from the medical community (nursing, physicians, pharmacists, etc.).

Councilor Fuhs noted the outstanding efforts to refocus the direction of the Board of Health over the last year. He stated that he will be requesting the Board of Health's assistance with emergency preparedness for immunization and other health issues. He stated that he is not comfortable with the regional preparedness to handle pandemic and immunization issues.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the good leadership from the Board of Health. She agreed with the need for a closer look at preparedness as it relates to the survival of the elderly during severe weather events. She asked the Board of Health to present Council with a listing of potential health issues for the City.

Council President Spencer inquired about the loss of emergency health services in the City due to the move of St. Joseph Medical Center.

Dr. Hassel replied that Urgent Care is provided at the Community Campus from 4 – 8 pm. He also noted that the Reading Hospital is considering opening an emergency medical unit at a suitable location. He stated that he and the Board of Health are monitoring the need for emergency medical services carefully due to the move of St. Joseph Medical Center.

Council President Spencer expressed concern about the effect the St. Joseph Medical Center move has had on the City's ambulance service.

Dr. Hassel stated that Reading Hospital has seen emergency medical service visits increase by 700 visits per day. Mr. Churchill replied that the largest impact has affected the City's delivery of service time increasing it from 20 minutes to 30 minutes per case.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the importance of local emergency services due to the gun violence in the City.

### **Charter Amendments**

Council President Spencer announced the results of the poll of potential Charter amendments administered by Council staff. Ms. Kelleher explained that the poll provides consensus for Charter amendments for the spring 2007 ballot, the fall 2007 ballot, and the spring 2008 ballot. She noted the need for the City to have the amendment language to the election office by March 16<sup>th</sup>.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired if the recall provision can be removed without referendum as it is unconstitutional. Mr. Younger expressed the belief that removing the recall provision must be done through the referendum process.

### **Neutrality of Solicitor**

Councilor Sterner expressed the belief that the City has no need for two solicitors to serve the Mayor and Council. He agreed with the suggested dual consent for dismissal of the solicitor.

Council President Spencer agreed and suggested that additional staff could assist with the current backlog of legal issues and be made

available to provide direct service to Council on legislative issues and initiatives.

Mr. Churchill stated that additional legal personnel needs to be addressed during the budget process.

Council President Spencer agreed with the sense of both Mayor and Council consent for the termination of the solicitor. He stated that the dual consent will provide the solicitor with a necessary degree of neutrality.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted her appreciation for the options presented to Council. She stated her agreement with requiring dual consent for termination. She also noted the need for a broader scope of legal services in the solicitor's office.

Councilor Fuhs questioned the ability of the Mayor or Council to obtain outside legal advice to seek a secondary legal opinion. Council President Spencer stated that generally the conflict issue is reviewed by the solicitor and the solicitor then determines that additional legal assistance is needed.

Councilor Sterner expressed the belief that Council should have the ability to obtain a second opinion.

Mr. Churchill explained the proper method to manage legal opinions and the solicitor's office.

### Residency

Council President Spencer explained the questions regarding the Charter's mandate for residency and its meaning culminated during the Eppihimer Administration. He stated that, at this time, it was noted that a person could have many residences but only one domicile. He noted the difficulties of inconsistent application of City residency for the heads of departments, offices, and agencies.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with the need for clear wording.

Mr. Younger agreed with the need for clarity noting that providing this clarity may take more than one referendum effort.

Council discussed option #1 requiring the heads of City departments, offices, and agencies to reside in the City with the term residency defined

as domicile and option #6 which would eliminate the Charter requirement for City department directors and heads of offices and agencies. After the discussion, Council reached consensus to consider the following for referendum questions:

- Solicitor – requiring the dual consent of the Mayor and five members of Council to dismiss the City solicitor
- Residency - #1 – requiring the heads of City departments, offices, and agencies to reside in the City with the term residency defined as domicile and #6 to eliminate the Charter requirement for residency of City department directors and heads of offices and agencies.

Ms. Kelleher will work with Mr. Younger to draft the questions.

Ms. Kelleher noted the need for Council to reach consensus no later than Monday, March 12, 2007.

### **Snow Removal**

Mr. Jones summarized the latest 22 hour snow event culminating in three inches of snow topped by two inches of ice and an additional inch of snow. He stated that the City is served by ten 5-ton dump trucks, ten 1 ½ - ton smaller dump trucks, 40 full time employees (providing 20 men per shift using a cross section of streets, parks, and sanitary sewer personnel) and several small pick up trucks with front-end plows (which were useless during this event due to the ice accumulation).

Mr. Jones explained that a snow emergency is not called until the City receives 15 inches of snow. He explained that the City contracts with Windsor Service for assistance during major snow events. He stated that most City streets are plowed once per twelve hour shift. He noted the need for the City to make shared personnel arrangements with the Water Authority.

Councilor Sterner noted the number of people who saved parking spaces with furniture, etc.

Mr. Jones replied that Public Works staff is instructed to collect items during their travels. These items collected are then disposed of.

Councilor Baez inquired if vacant City properties are cited for lack of snow removal.

Mr. Churchill replied that all properties that do not clear snow and ice from sidewalks are warned, and then cited.

Councilor Fuhs noted the lack of snow removal at the metered parking spaces at the 400 and 500 blocks of Penn Street. Mr. Churchill stated that he would work with DID and the Parking Authority to get the metered spaces cleared.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that the extreme methods of parking have caused hazards. She suggested that the City seek cooperation from businesses with large lots and open parks for citizen parking which will allow curb to curb snow removal. She also reminded residents of the need to clear a path from the sidewalk to the street to provide access.

### **Loading Zone**

Council President Spencer referred the Loading Zone policy to the March Public Works Committee meeting or March Work Session.

The Work Session adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

---

Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk